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A PETITION

—TO THE—

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President of the United States.

4 Ripon Terrace, Bonham Road,
Hong Kong, October 10, 1901.

To the President, Executive Mansion, Washington,
D. C., United States of America—Sir:—

Before proceeding with that which forms the body of this communication, we, the Filipino central committee, on behalf of our fellow-countrymen, desire to express our sympathy with the people of the United States, who have been so suddenly and tragically deprived of their distinguished chief magistrate, in the person of the late President William McKinley. In the presence of such a painful circumstance we should prefer to maintain a respectful silence, but the nature of this communication will make it clear that it is impossible for us to longer delay its transmission.

The committee, having authority to act from the general in command of the Filipino forces, beg to submit to your earnest attention and favorable consideration, an appeal, the objects of which are to secure, if possible, permanent peace in our country, and to suggest the establishment of such relations between the two countries as shall meet the approval of the American government, and at the same time satisfy the legitimate aspirations of our people.

In making this appeal it is first necessary to state what we regard as the underlying cause of the conflict, and to draw attention to the increasing gravity of the present situation, not in a spirit of defiance, but in order that truth may guide future deliberation.

The most important fact, and one about which there has been the gravest misapprehension, is that relating to the origin, intensity and extent of our people's aspiration for independent national life. It has been

represented that this aspiration is of recent growth; that it took its rise after the arrival of the American land forces; that it was entertained, not by the people in general, but by "a few politico-military adventurers;" and that the purpose of the previous rising of the Filipinos had been solely to obtain reforms, and did not include separation from Spain.

All of these statements are the reverse of what is true, and we are forced to the conclusion that with those who made them the wish was father to the thought.

It is true that at a certain period in the insurrection of 1896-7 our people did agree to the treaty of Biak-na-Bato, which has been cited by some as evidence. But this treaty was intended simply as a stepping-stone to independence. For with the control in governmental affairs which its stipulated reforms would give, or with the accession to our arms which the actual money payment would otherwise provide, the means of obtaining final independence would be secured. Thus our people had the prudence to be content to walk ere they ran; but the intention to secure final separation from Spain was ever present with them. The aspiration for independence existed long prior to any of these events. In July, 1897,—five months before the signing of the treaty—Aguinaldo issued a proclamation in French and Spanish, in which he said: "National life unjustly withheld from us, we, children of liberty, will show to the whole world that, just as we have a language of our own, so we are worthy to have a country and a government of our own. Therefore, led by zeal for the public welfare, we aspire to obtain our liberty and independence." The aim, too, of Dr. Rizal was independence. In his great work, "El Filibusterismo," published 10 years ago (1891), he adopts as the motto and motive of his book the significant words of his intimate friend, Prof. Blumentritt: That the monks themselves were unconsciously acting in such a manner as "to extend the ideas of filibusterism throughout the entire country, and to convince the last Filipino that there exists no other salvation save separation from the mother-country."

The works of Rizal were the inspiration of the insurrection against Spain, as the Spaniards and religious orders knew only too well. Consequently, the assertion that the idea of independence arose for the first time after the arrival of a certain American general showed an entire lack of knowledge of the real situation.

Owing to this lack of knowledge of the real cause of the opposition to American authority many conclusions have been reached which events have since proved to be erroneous. Thus, it was declared that the capture of our capitals and the dispersal of our organization would put an end to the war. Indeed, it was then and many times thereafter stated that the war was over. Again, after the American forces had been largely increased without any apparent effect, it was authoritatively declared that the Filipinos were only awaiting the result of the presidential elections, and that 60 days thereafter all armed resistance would cease. This having proved incorrect, it was then asserted that the one thing needful was the capture of our leader, and when that had been achieved, the war was again declared to be at an end.

Any one of these prophecies might have been fulfilled, if the grounds upon which they were made had been true. If it had been a fact that the masses of the Philippine people were being misled or forced into the conflict in order to satisfy the ambition of a few unscrupulous adventurers, the last vestige of opposition to American authority would have been crushed out long ago. But all these prophecies have failed because they did not take into account the intense and universal desire of our people for independent national life, which has been, and will continue to be, the perennial spring of all opposition to foreign rule, to which alone must be attributed the fact that a practically unarmed people, notwithstanding the successive loss of their capitals and the capture of their chief, have been able to avoid a crushing and final defeat at the hands of a country immeasurably superior in power and wealth.

A review of the present situation also will show that this aspiration has lost none of its force. All the reverses which our people have met with, and all the rigors of a war in which, in many respects, mercy has not been conspicuous, have not lessened their determination to continue the defense, at whatever sacrifice. The capture of our leader is regarded as one of the fortunes of war. The consequent temporary decrease in our defensive operations has proved to be simply an example of the ebb and flow which accompany all military conflicts. The surrender of some of our generals has served to separate the chaff from the wheat, while the taking of the oath of allegiance by a number of our people may, in cases where sordid motives did not enter, be attributed to causes other than that of desire for American rule, or a

surrender of their aspiration for independence. The hope that American rule would find favor with our people, owing to the establishment of civil government, has not been realized. We have evidence from private sources showing that during the last three months discontent with the present situation has been growing more intense. It should be remembered that, according to the best information at our command, drawn from American official sources, only 35 out of the 78 provinces have been placed under what is termed civil government; and of these we know that in several our countrymen are only held in check by superior military forces, and are only waiting a more favorable opportunity to assert their rights. From recent dispatches we learn also that in three of the provinces apparently pacified, preparations are being made for risings in support of the national defense, and this notwithstanding the approach of the dry season, when the natural advantages in military operations lie with their opponents.

In support of these statements we point to the pronounced recrudescence of the armed resistance to American control which has recently taken place; to the fact that out of those provinces placed under civil government, three were in July last returned to military rule; and to the equally significant fact that of the three Filipino political parties in the Philippines, two are working, by peaceful means, for ultimate independence, and the third for admission as states of the Union, all rejecting the colonial idea.

But we wish to state distinctly that our war is being waged in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence. Our objects are the same as those which animated the founders of the country with which we are now in conflict, and from whom we receive moral "aid and comfort." And we are fortunate in finding our justification written upon the brightest pages of American history. Our war is not of recent origin. It was originally directed against the usurpation and despotism of Spain. And it is only by accident, or by that change of fortune which we least of all expected or desired, that we now find ourselves in conflict with America. In a recent proclamation, Gen. Malvar, now in command of our forces, declares: "Our banner is not that of war against America, but of the rightful defense of a people whose most cherished and sacred rights have been trampled under foot." He further declares that the aim is not to "kill all Americans, who, like ourselves, have mothers, wives, daughters, or sons who would mourn their

loss," but to defend "our legitimate right to have a government of our own and an independent national life." In this he expresses with dignity and precision the sentiments of every right-thinking Filipino.

It is natural, when an armed conflict arises, that there should be a large element of mutual distrust. But we respectfully submit that this distrust has been increased by the continued refusal of the United States to give assurance that the rights of the Filipino, as they understand them, will receive ultimate recognition. It is true that we have been promised many good things, but accompanying these promises there has been a demand for unconditional surrender to American authority, without any assurance that the one thing which we value most will ever be granted to us. This demand, and the absence of this assurance, are regarded by our people as evidence that their rights are not admitted. They hold that to yield to this demand and to thus cease their defense would be rightly construed as an admission that their rights did not exist. They argue—and we consider the argument legitimate, whatever the real truth may be—that if there is no intention to permanently deprive them of their rights, America ought to be willing to give some kind of assurance to that effect. Such an assurance, we are all agreed, would put an end to a conflict which, by its peculiar conditions, is one of unusual severity and horror. And the withholding of such an assurance, in the face of a consummation so desirable, only adds to that distrust which no promise of good government, prosperity, or social enlightenment can dispel. It ought to be evident to American statesmen that there must be more than mere adventure or personal ambition in this dogged resistance of our people. It ought to be apparent by this time that the theories hitherto advanced are inadequate to account for the facts. The failure of the American authorities in the Philippines to restore peace can be attributed to only one cause. Neither rigorous methods of warfare nor the establishment of civil government, with promise of prosperity and social well-being, has proved effective, because these promises, though admittedly good, in no way satisfy the aspiration of our people, and therefore can have no effect upon the situation. When the bread of national life is asked for, it will not suffice to offer a stone, even though the stone be a diamond.

In view, therefore, of the remoteness of a settlement of the conflict under present relations, and in view of the impending serious loss of life and prop-

erty, unhappily to both parties, should the relations continue, we lay aside our pride and appeal for a reconsideration of the situation, in the hope that a way may be found, mutually satisfactory, of ending this conflict, by giving such intimation to our countrymen as will assure them of the ultimate recognition of their legitimate rights.

It is only human for us to believe that we are in the right, and, so believing, we should naturally regard such a reconsideration as an act of justice. But we realize that those who support the present policy consider us to be in the wrong, and we should therefore accept a reconsideration of the matter by them as an act of magnanimity.

We are conscious that in making this appeal we are adopting an unusual course, and we realize also that there are difficulties in the way. But we hope that with the acknowledgment that we shall herein make, and with the assurances which we propose to give, these difficulties may be surmounted.

Apart from contending claims—which we believe are capable of being adjusted by the method hereunder suggested, in a condition of peace—the chief difficulty to a settlement of the conflict lies in the contention that anything in the form of negotiation with those who offer armed resistance to the authority of the United States would be liable to misconception, and would result in a loss of prestige to American arms. The popular form of this contention is: “We must first teach these Filipinos to respect us and to submit to our authority.”

The “respect” of a people who have been battered into submission is a respect which ought to be regarded by every free American with pity, contempt, and scorn. Our real respect can be obtained by other and more dignified means. We do not require any further lesson to teach us the immeasurable superiority in power of a nation which has enjoyed all the blessings of liberty for more than 100 years, and which is 10 times as great in population, and incalculably greater in wealth. We, on the other hand, have been struggling under a corrupt and archaic despotism which retarded all progress and sapped the natural power of our people. In our present condition our forces are, by comparison, limited in monetary resources, very inadequately armed, and, of necessity, imperfectly organized. We therefore consider it no discredit to acknowledge, and we do authoritatively acknowledge, that the American power is supreme,

and that the prestige of American arms has been vindicated throughout this conflict.

A second difficulty is founded on the assumption that, if internal control were given to the Filipinos, those of our fellow countrymen who had supported American authority would be liable to maltreatment and disability.

Such an assumption is hardly in harmony with the belief, held by many Americans, that a majority of our people are in favor of American rule, for a majority ought surely to be able to defend itself. But apart from this, we contend that the supposition is groundless. We know that a large proportion of those who openly support American authority do so only to avoid suspicion, and many of them have assured us that their heart is with the cause of their countrymen in arms. There are some Filipinos who, for reasons of their own, have taken a position in favor of American occupation, and there are a few also who are fighting against their fellow countrymen. The treatment by our government of such men as Buencamino, Tavera and the Macabebes, who opposed the Filipinos in the insurrection against Spain, is in itself sufficient to dispel any fear of future ill-treatment. But at the proper time satisfactory undertakings could be given of protection, and of amnesty to those who have taken up arms against our people for all acts done under American authority. America would always have the right and the means to enforce such contracts, and thus ample protection would be given to these men, although naturally they will not be able to escape social ostracism whether under American or Filipino rule.

A technical difficulty arises out of the fact that the Philippine government has never received recognition by the United States or by any other sovereign power. It has been contended that there is consequently no Philippine authority with which the American government could negotiate, even if it had the desire, and that to have relations with those claiming such authority would imply a recognition which America cannot and will not give.

We claim to have authority on behalf of the Philippine people—authority which, having been properly conferred, is acknowledged and would be obeyed. But if there is technical validity in the above contention, our people would be prepared to accept an assurance of the ultimate recognition of their rights through an indirect channel, either by proclamation to the Philippine people in general or by an annun-

ciation of policy to the people of America, or by such other methods as may be deemed proper. The technical difficulty would thus be surmounted, and the object of this appeal achieved, without giving recognition to any real or "so-called" Philippine authority. And as soon as peace had been established a constitutional convention could be convened similar to the one operating in Cuba, with which all future relations could be held, and by which all differences could be adjusted.

Without necessarily seeking for recognition of our authority, we consider it proper to state, very briefly, by what authority we act—

In an official communication, dated 31st of July, 1901, Gen. Miguel Malvar, in supreme command of the Filipino forces, confirms the power previously held by this committee, and supplements it, declaring us to be the body legally representing those in arms, and recognizing in us the fullest powers.

Finally, in the hope and with the earnest prayer that this appeal may meet with a favorable response, we respectfully represent that no way can be found of putting an end to this unhappy conflict which does not include an adequate assurance to our people of some form of ultimate national life. We ask in all sincerity, Is not this aspiration both legitimate and laudable? And if so, what other course would you have a self-respecting people adopt? What greater proof of our sincerity and devotion could there be than the prolongation of resistance, even after the complete supremacy of American arms has been established? The armies of America can march unresisted from end to end of our country, but wherever they are not present our people unite, drawn together by a common desire. The American armies can defeat our troops, but they cannot defeat or destroy this desire, unless by the destruction of those who hold it—and such an act as this we can never believe the American people would knowingly authorize.

And if it prove that yours should be the hand to liberate our people, a name honored in your country will be beloved and ever memorable in ours.

With every assurance of our esteem, we beg to subscribe ourselves, yours with great respect, Per el Comite Central Filipino.

El Presidente, G. Apacible, (rubricado).

Consejeros, E. Riego, V. Ilustre.

Celestino Rodriguez (rubricado).

El Secretario, Cretano Lukban, (rubricado).

El Copia, C. Lukban.

For copies, address the Anti-Imperialist League of New York, 150 Nassau Street, Room 1502, or P. O. Box 1111, New York City.